

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 /039 W
-----242048Z 024336 /71
R 241620Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5573

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0551

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, TS
SUBJECT: UGTT CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY, CONSOLIDATES DOMESTIC
POSITION

REF: TUNIS A-141, DECEMBER 29, 1976

1. ON JANUARY 20 GENERAL UNION OF TUNISIAN WORKERS (UGTT) CELEBRATED ITS 31ST ANNIVERSARY AT GABES IN SOUTHERN TUNISIA. THE MEETING, PRESIDED OVER BY UGTT SECRETARY GENERAL HABIB ACHOUR, WAS ATTENDED BY GOT MINISTERS MONCEF BELHADJ AMOR (NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RELATIONS) AND MOHAMED ENNACEUR (SOCIAL AFFAIRS), FOREIGN DELEGATES INCLUDING ICFTU LEADER OTTO KERSTEN AND AFL-CIO EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE IRVING BROWN, AND NUMEROUS TUNISIAN TRADE UNIONISTS.

2. SPEECHES GIVEN AT CEREMONY TOOK NOTE OF RECENT SALARY INCREASES DECREED BY THE GOT (SEE TUNIS 0517) AND IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY UGTT IN TUNISIAN HISTORY AND IN CURRENT NATIONAL AFFAIRS. MINISTER FOR RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT BELHADJ AMOR TOOK SPECIAL NOTE OF PRESENCE OF TWO MINISTERS AS EVIDENCE OF GOT'S HIGH REGARD FOR UGTT AND FOR ACHOUR'S PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION.

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3. WITH UGTT CELEBRATING ITS ANNIVERSARY AND ENJOYING OFFICIAL PRAISE FOR ITS ROLE IN SALARY READJUSTMENT PROCESS, ATTACKS AGAINST SCHOUR AND UGTT WHICH EMANATED FROM HIGH PSD CIRCLES IN LATE 1976 HAVE DISAPPEARED. PSD DIRECTOR MOHAMED SAYAH HAS CEASED HIS REMARKS AGAINST "DIVISIVE ELEMENTS" WHILE MINISTER OF INTERIOR TAHAR BELKHODJA HAS DELIVERED A MAJOR SPEECH IN WHICH HE SINGLED

OUT UGTT AND ACHOUR FOR SPECIAL PRAISE.

4. IT APPEARS THAT PARTY AND GOVERNMENT HAVE PUT HARD FEELINGS CREATED OVER STATE LANDS DISPUTE BEHIND THEM AND THAT THEY HAVE ACCEPTED REALITY OF INCREASED INTERNAL STRENGTH AND COMBATIVENESS OF UGTT. WHILE PARTY LEADERS MIGHT STILL WISH ACHOUR WERE LESS POWERFUL, THEIR RECENT ACTIONS INDICATE RECOGNITION OF FACT HE CANNOT BE WEAKENED WITHOUT RISK OF SOCIAL DISRUPTION. AS FIFTH DEVELOPMENT PLAN IS BEING LAUNCHED AND AS NOUIRA IS TRYING TO TO

SEEK HIS POLITICAL BASE, GOT CLEARLY SEES THIS RISK TO POLITICAL STABILITY AS TOO GREAT. ACHOUR HAS EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE--ON HIS OWN TERMS-- AND THESE NOW SEEM TO HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED.

MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMMEMORATIVE CELEBRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 24-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TUNIS00551
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770025-0715
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770123/aaaaatwr.tel
Line Count: 78
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 48092bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TUNIS A-141
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3516912
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UGTT CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY, CONSOLIDATES DOMESTIC POSITION
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, TS, UGTT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/48092bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009